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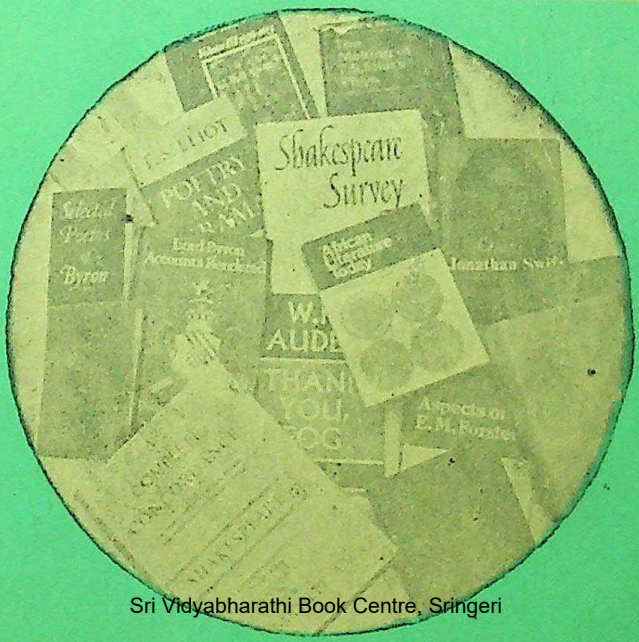
REVELATIONS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF ENGLISH POETRY

FOR DEGREE CLASSES

PREPARED BY:
A COMMITTEE OF TEACHERS



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UNIVERSITY OF MYSORE

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AN ANTHOLOGY OF
ENGLISH POETRY
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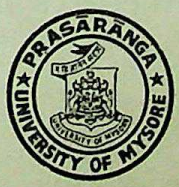
Prepared by a Committee of Teachers
appointed by the University of Mysore



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PREFACE

The anthologies of Prose and Poetry, *Reflections* and *Revelations*, are designed to fulfill the twin obligations of literature—*dulce et utile*, delight and instruction. The Editorial Committee is pleased to place before the students and teachers what has been its most painstaking and responsible work of providing introductions to the lessons and adequate notes and explanations so as to enable them to understand and appreciate the selections better, hoping that the students will be encouraged to look up dictionaries, refer to additional material in the libraries and seek teachers' advice for further reading. And if this happens the Committee would feel greatly fulfilled in its labour of love.

The Editorial Committee wishes to thank the former Chairman, Prof. H. H. Anniah Gowda, under whose stewardship this noble task was begun.

POLANKI RAMAMOORTHY
Chairman
Editorial Committee

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FULL MANY A GLORIOUS MORNING

Full many a glorious morning have I seen,
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green;
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy:
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride,
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my sun one early morn did shine
With all-triumphant splendour on my brow;
But out alack, he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath masked him from me now.

Yet him for this my love no whit
disdaineth;
Suns of the world may stain when
heaven's sun staineth.

—*William Shakespeare*

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LET ME NOT TO THE MARRIAGE OF TRUE MINDS

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

—*William Shakespeare*

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ON HIS BLINDNESS

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul
more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,—
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied ?
I fondly ask : —But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies ; God doth not need
Either man's work, or His own gifts : who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best :
His state
Is kingly ; thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest :—
They also serve who only stand and wait.

—*John Milton*

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SONG

Sweetest Love, I do not goe
    For wearinesse of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
    A fitter Love for mee;
    But since that I
Must dye at last, 'tis best,
To use my selfe in jest
    Thus by fain'd deaths to dye;

Yesternight the Sunne went hence,
    And yet is here to day,
He hath no desire nor sense,
Nor halfe so short a way:
    Then feare not mee,
But beleeve that I shall make
Speedier journeyes, since I take
    More wings and spurres than hee.

O how feeble is mans power,
    That if good fortune fall,
Cannot adde another houre,
    Nor a lost houre recall!
    But come bad chance,
And wee joyne to 'it ourstrength,
And wee teach it art and length,
    It selfe o'r us to'advance.

When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not winde,
    But sigh'st my soule away,
When thou weep'st, unkindly kinde,
    My lifes blood doth decay.
    It cannot bee

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That thou lov'st mee, as thou say'st,
If in thine my life thou waste,
    That art the best of mee.

Let not thy divining heart
    Forethinke me any ill,
Destiny may take thy part,
    And may thy feares fulfill;
      But thinke that wee
Are but turn'd aside to sleepe;
They who one another keepe
    Alive, ne'r parted bee.

—*John Donne*

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SONG FOR SAINT CECILIA'S DAY

From Harmony, from heavenly Harmony
This universal frame began:
When Nature underneath a heap
Of jarring atoms lay
And could not heave her head,
The tuneful voice was heard from high
Arise, ye more than dead!
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry
In order to their stations leap,
And Music's power obey.
From harmony, from heavenly harmony
This universal frame began:
From harmony to harmony
Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
The diapason closing full in Man.

What passion cannot Music raise and quell?
When Jubal struck the chorded shell
His listening brethren stood around,
And, wondering, on their faces fell
To worship that celestial sound.
Less than a god they thought there could not dwell
Within the hollow of that shell
That spoke so sweetly and so well.
What passion cannot Music raise and quell?

The trumpet's loud clangor
Excites us to arms,
With shrill notes of anger
And mortal alarms.

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The double double double beat
Of the thundering drum
Cries 'Hark! the foes come;
Charge, charge, 'tis too late to retreat!'

The soft complaining flute
In dying notes discovers
The woes of hopeless lovers,
Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling lute.

Sharp violins proclaim
Their jealous pangs and desperation,
Fury, frantic indignation,
Depth of pains, and height of passion
For the fair disdainful dame.

But oh! what art can teach,
What human voice can reach
The sacred organ's praise?
Notes inspiring holy love,
Notes that wing their heavenly ways
To mend the choirs above.

Orpheus could lead the savage race,
And trees unrooted left their place
Sequacious of the lyre:
But bright Cecilia raised the wonder higher:
When to her Organ vocal breath was given,
An Angel heard, and straight appear'd—
Mistaking Earth for Heaven!

Grand Chorus

As from the power of sacred lays
The spheres began to move,
And sung the great Creator's praise
To all the blest above;

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So when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And Music shall untune the sky.

—*John Dryden*

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HOW SWEET I ROAMED

How sweet I roam'd from field to field
And tasted all the summer's pride,
Till I the Prince of Love beheld,
Who in the sunny beams did glide!

He shew'd me lilies for my hair,
And blushing roses for my brow;
He led me through his gardens fair,
Where all his golden pleasures grow.

With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
And Phoebus fired my vocal rage
He caught me in his silken net,
And shut me in his golden cage.

He loves to sit and hear me sing;
Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
Then stretches out my golden wing,
And mocks my loss of liberty.

—*William Blake*

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FROST AT MIDNIGHT

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet's cry
Came loud—and hark, again! Loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.
'Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.
Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,

How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering stranger! and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birth-place, and the old

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Whose bells, the poor man's only music, rang
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!
So gazed I, till the soothing things I dreamt,
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!
And so I brooded all the following morn,
Awed by the stern preceptor's face, mine eye
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,
Fill up the interspersed vacancies
And momentary pauses of the thought!
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,
And in far other scenes! For I was reared
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible
Of that eternal language, which thy God

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Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.

Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.

—*S. T. Coleridge*

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LAODAMIA

"With sacrifice before the rising morn
Vows have I made by fruitless hope inspired;
And from the infernal Gods, 'mid shades forlorn
Of night, my slaughtered Lord have I required:
Celestial pity I again implore;—
Restore him to my sight—great Jove, restore."

So speaking, and by fervent love endowed
With faith, the Suppliant heavenward lifts
her hands;
While like the sun emerging from a cloud,
Her countenance brightens—and her eye
expands;
Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature
grows;
And she expects the issue in repose.

O terror! What hath she perceived?—O joy!
What doth she look on? whom doth she behold?
Her Hero slain upon the beach of Troy?
His vital presence? his corporeal mould?
It is—if sense deceive her not—'tis He!
And a God leads him, winged Mercury!

Mild Hermes spake—and touched her with
his wand
That calms all fear; "Such grace hath
crowned thy prayer,
Laodamia! that at Jove's command
Thy Husband walks the paths of upper air;
He comes to tarry with thee three hours' space,
Accept the gift, behold him face to face!"

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Forth sprang the impassioned Queen her
Lord to clasp:
Again that consummation she essayed;
But unsubstantial Form eludes her grasp
As often as that eager grasp was made.
The Phantom parts—but parts to re-unite,
And re-assume his place before her sight.

"Protesilaus, Lo! thy guide is gone!
Confirm, I pray, the vision with thy voice:
This is our palace,—yonder is thy throne:
Speak, and the floor thou tread'st on will rejoice,
Not to appal me have the gods bestowed
This precious boon; and blest a sad abode."

"Great, Jove, Laodamia, doth not leave
His gifts imperfect;—Spectre though I be,
I am not sent to scare thee or deceive;
But in reward of thy fidelity.
And something also did my worth obtain;
For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain."

"Thou knowest, the Delphic oracle foretold
That the first Greek who touched the Trojan
strand
Should die; but me the threat could not
withhold;
A generous cause a victim did demand;
And forth I leapt upon the sandy plain;
A self-devoted chief—by Hector slain."

"Supreme of Heroes—bravest, noblest, best!
Thy matchless courage I bewail no more,
Which then, when tens of thousands were deprest
By doubt, propelled thee to the fatal shore;

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Thou found'st—and I forgive thee—here thou
art—
A nobler counsellor than my poor heart.

"But thou, though capable of sternest deed.
Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave;
And he, whose power restores thee, hath decreed
Thou shouldst elude the malice of the grave:
Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair
As when their breath enriched Thessalian air.

"No Spectre greets me,—no vain Shadow this;
Come, blooming Hero, place thee by my side!
Give, on this well-known couch, one nuptial kiss
To me, this day, a second time thy bride!"
Jove frowned in heaven: the conscious
Parcae threw
Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue.

"This visage tells thee that my doom is past:
Nor should the change be mourned, even if
the joys
Of sense were able to return as fast
And surely as they vanish. Earth destroys
Those raptures duly—Erebus disdains:
Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains.

"Be taught, O faithful consort, to control
Rebellious passion: for the Gods approve
The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul;
A fervent, not ungovernable, love.
Thy transports moderate; and meekly mourn
When I depart, for beief is my sojourn—"

"Ah, wherefore?—Did not Hercules by force
Wrest from the guardian Monster of the tomb

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Alcestis, a reanimated corse,
Given back to dwell on earth in vernal bloom?
Medea's spells dispersed the weight of years,
And AEson stood a youth 'mid youthful peers.

"The Gods to us are merciful—and they
Yet further may relent; for mightier far
Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway
Of magic potent over sun and star,
Is love, though oft to agony distrest,
And though his favourite seat be feeble
woman's breast.

"But if thou goest, I follow—" "Peace!"
he said,—
She looked upon him and was calmed and
cheered;
The ghastly colour from his lips had fled;
In his deportment, shape, and mien, appeared
Elysian beauty, melancholy grace,
Brought from a pensive though a happy place.

He apake of love, such love as Spirits feel
In worlds, whose course is equable and pure;
No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—
The past unsighed for, and the future sure;
Spake of heroic arts in graver mood
Revived, with finer harmony pursued;

Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there
In happier beauty; more pellucid streams,
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the
brightest day
Earth knows, is an unworthy to survey.

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Yet there the Soul shall enter which hath earned
That privilege by virtue—"Ill", said he,
"The end of man's existence I discerned,
Who from ignoble games and revelry
Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight;
While tears were thy best pastime, day and night;

"And while my youthful peers before my eyes
(Each hero following his peculiar bent)
Prepared themselves for glorious enterprise
By martial sports,—or, seated in the tent,
Chieftains and kings in council were detained;
What time the fleet at Aulis lay enchained.

"The wished-for wind was given:—I then revolved
The oracle, upon the silent sea;
And, if no worthier led the way, resolved
That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be
The foremost prow in pressing to the strand,—
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand.

"Yet bitter, oft-times bitter, was the pang
When of thy loss I thought, beloved Wife!
On thee too fondly did my memory hang,
And on the joys we shared in mortal life,—
The paths which we had trod—these fountains, flowers;
My new-planned cities, and unfinished towers.

"But should suspense permit the Foe to cry,
'Behold they tremble! haughty their array,
Yet of their number no one dares to die?'

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In soul I swept the indignity away:
Old frailties then recurred:—but lofty thought,
In act embodied, my deliverance wrought.

"And Thou, though strong in love, art all too weak
In reason, in self-government too slow;
I counsel thee by fortitude to seek
Our blest re-union in the shades below.
The invisible world with thee hath sympathized;
Be thy affections raised and solemnized.

"Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend—
Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end;
For this the passion to excess was driven
That self might be annulled; her bondage prove
The fetters of a dream opposed to love."—

Aloud she shrieked! for Hermes reappears!
Round the dear Shade she would have clung—'tis vain;
The hours are past—too brief had they been years;
And him no mortal effort can detain:
Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly day,
He through the portal takes his silent way,
And on the palace-floor a lifeless corse she lay.

Thus, all in vain exhorted and reproved,
She perished; and, as for a wilful crime,
By the just Gods whom no weak pity moved,
Was doomed to wear out her appointed time,
Apart from happy Ghosts, that gather flowers
Of blissful quiet 'mid unfading bowers.

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—Yet tears to human suffering are due;
And mortal hopes defeated and o'erthrown
Are mourned by man, and not by man alone,
As fondly he believes.—Upon the side
Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained)
A knot of spiry trees for ages grew
From out the tomb of him for whom she died;
And ever, when such stature they had gained
That Ilium's walls were subject to their view,
The tree's tall summits withered at the sight;
A constant interchange of growth and blight!

—*William Wordsworth*

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ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,—
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,

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Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin,
and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden-eyed despairs;
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond
to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and
retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the
breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding
mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the
boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wlid;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on
summer eves.

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Darkling I lisent; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! The fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

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Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music:—do I wake or sleep?

—*John Keats*

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MORTE D'ARTHUR

So all day long the noise of battle rolled
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonnesse about their Lord,
King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm

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Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king:
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me
word'.

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word'.

So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping
down
By zig-zag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran
forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,

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This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Hast thou performed my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag'.

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
'Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseemed
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had followed, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word'.

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixed in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud,

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,

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Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost'.

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds'.

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To whom replied King Arthur, much
in wrath:
Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widowed of the power in his eye
That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands'.

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great
brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in
an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

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Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?'
And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere'.

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
'My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die'.

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

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But, as he walk'd King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die'.
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him, like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stem,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills

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All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmured Arthur, 'Place me in the barge,'
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,
And called him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the withered moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the Springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parched with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mixed with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shattered column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournment,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

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Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world;
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds'.

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer

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Both for themselves and those who call them
friend ?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion ;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly ; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound'.

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted
swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

—*Lord Tennyson*

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THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

I SAID—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
    Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
    —And this beside, if you will not blame,
    Your leave for one more last ride with me.

My mistress bent that brow of hers;
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
    With life or death in the balance: right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain:
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
    Who knows but the world may end
    to-night?
Hush! if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's and evening-star's at once—

    And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,

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Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
    Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out—a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
    What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
    And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
    As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,—All labour, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
    I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

What hand and brain went ever paired?
What heart alike conceived and dared?
What act proved all its thought had been?
What will but felt the fleshly screen?
    We ride and I see her bosom heave.
There's many a crown for who can reach.

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Ten lines, a statesman's life in each!
The flag stuck on a heap of bones,
A soldier's doing! what atones?
They scratch his name on the Abbey-stones.
My riding is better, by their leave.

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
And pace them in rhyme so, side by side.
'Tis something, nay 'tis much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

And you, great sculptor—so, you gave
A score of years to Art, her slave,
And that's your Venus, whence we turn
To yonder girl that fords the burn!
You acquiesce, and shall I repine?
What, man of music, you, grown grey
With notes and nothing else to say,
Is this your sole praise from a friend,
'Greatly his opera's strains intend,
But in music we know how fashions end!'
I gave my youth—but we ride, in fine.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being—had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
—Have a care that this may be enough, I mean,
Duly to die with, dim-descried.

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This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
This foot once planted on the goal,
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
    Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

And yet—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned
Whither life's flower is first descerned,
    We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
    Ride, ride together, for ever ride?

—*Robert Browning*

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MANDALAY

BY the old moulmein pagoda, lookin' lazy
at the sea,
There's a Burma girl a—settin', and I know
she thinks o' me;
For the wind is in the palm-trees, and the
temple-bells they say:
"Come you back, you British soldier: come
you back to Mandalay!"

Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old Flotilla lay:
Can't you 'ear their paddles chunkin'
from Rangoon to Mandalay?
On the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
Ah' the dawn comes up like thunder
outer China' crost the bay!

'Er petticoat was yaller an' 'er little cap was
green,
An' er name was Supi-yaw-lat-jes' the same
as Theebaw's Queen,
An' I seed her first a-smokin' of a whackin'
white cheroot,
An' a—wastin' Christian kisses on an
'eathen idol's foot:

Bloomin' idol made o' mud—
Wot they called the Great Gawd Budd—
Plucky lot she cared for idols when I
kissed er Where she stud!
On the road to Mandalay...

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When the mist was on the rice-fields an'
the sun was droppin' slow,
She'd git'er little banjo an'she'd sing
Kulla-lo-lo
With 'er arm upon my shoulder an' 'er cheek
agin my cheek
We useter watch the steamers an' the
hathis pilin' teak.

Elephints a-pilin' teak
In the sludgy, squdgy creek
Where the silence 'ung that 'eavy you
was 'arf afraid!
On the road to Mandalay.....

But that's all shove be'ind me—long ago an' far away,
An' there ain't no 'buses runnin' from the Bank to Mandalay;
An' I'm learnin' 'ere in London what the ten-year soldier tells:
"If you've 'eard the East a-callin', you won't never 'eed naught else."

No! you won't 'eed nothin' else
But them spicy garlic smells,
An' the sunshine an' the palm-trees
an' the tinkly temple-bells;
On the road to Mandalay...

I am sick o' wastin' leather on these gritty pavin'-stones,
An' the blasted English drizzle wakes the fever in my bones;
Tho' I walks with fifty 'ousemaids outer Chelsea to the Strand,

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An' they talks a lot o' lovin', but wot do
they understand ?
Beefy face an' grubby' and—
Law ! wot do they understand ?
I've a neater, sweeter maiden in a
cleaner, greener land !
On the road to Mandalay...

Ship me somewheres east of Suez, where the
best is like the worst,
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments
an' a man can raise a thirst ;
For the temple-bells are callin', an' it's
there that I would be—
By the old Moulmein Pagoda, looking lazy
at the sea ;
On the road to Mandalay
Where the old Flotilla lay,
With our sick beneath the awnings when
we went to Mandalay !
O the road to Mandalay,
Where the flyin'-fishes play,
An' the dawn comes up like thunder
outer China 'crost the Bay !

—*Rudyard Kipling*

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O CAPTAIN ! MY CAPTAIN

O Captain ! my Captain ! our fearful trip
is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the
prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people
all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel
grim and daring ;
But O heart ! heart ! heart !
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain ! my Captain ! rise up and hear
the bells ;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you
the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for
you the shores
a crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their
eager faces turning ;
Here Captain ! dear father !
The arm beneath your head !
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are
pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no
pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its
voyage closed and done,

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From fearful trip the victor ship comes in
with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

—*Walt Whitman*

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TWO TRAMPS IN MUD TIME

Out of the mud two strangers came
And caught me splitting wood in the yard.
And one of them put me off my aim
By hailing cheerily "Hit them hard!"
I knew pretty well why he dropped behind
And let the other go on a way.
I knew pretty well what he had in mind:
He wanted to take my job for pay.

Good blocks of beech it was I split,
As large around as the chopping block:
And every piece I squarely hit
Fell splinterless as a cloven rock.
The blows that a life of self-control
Spares to strike for the common good
That day, giving a loose to my soul,
I spent on the unimportant wood.

The sun was warm but the wind was chill.
You know how it is with an April day
When the sun is out and the wind is still,
You're one month on in the middle of May.
But if you so much as dare to speak,
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,
A wind comes off a frozen peak,
And you're two months back in the middle
of March.

A bluebird comes tenderly up to alight
And fronts the wind to unruffle a plume
His song so pitched as not to excite
A single flower as yet to bloom.
It is snowing a flake: and he half knew

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Winter was only playing possum.
Except in color he isn't blue,
But he wouldn't advise a thing to blossom.

The water for which we may have to look
In summertime with a witching-wand,
In every wheelrut's now a brook,
In every print of a hoof a pond.
Be glad of water, but don't forget
The lurking frost in the earth beneath
That will steel forth after the sun is set
And show on the water its crystal teeth.

The time when most I loved my task
These two must make me love it more
By coming with what they came to ask.
You'd think I never had felt before
The weight of an ax-head poised aloft,
The grip on earth of outspread feet,
The life of muscles rocking soft
And smooth and moist in vernal heat.

Out of the woods two hulking tramps
(From sleeping God knows where last night,
But not long since in the lumber camps).
They thought all chopping was theirs of right.
Men of the woods and lumberjacks,
They judged me by their appropriate tool.
Except as a fellow handled an ax,
They had no way of knowing a fool.

Nothing on either side was said.
They knew they had but to stay their stay
And all their logic would fill my head:
As that I had no right to play
With what was another man's work for gain.

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My right might be love but theirs was need.
And where the two exist in twain
Theirs was the better right—agreed.

But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My evocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.
Only where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done
For Heaven and the future's sakes.

—*Robert Frost*

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EASTER, 1916

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth- century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,
Or have lingered awhile and said
Polite meaningless words,
And thought before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club,
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?
This man had kept a school
And rode our winged horse;
This other his helper and friend
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,
So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed

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A drunken, vainglorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet I number him in the song;
He, too has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone
Through summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud,
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minute by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minute by minute they live:
The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last has come
On limbs that had run wild.

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What is it but nightfall ?
No, no, not night but death ;
Was it needless death after all ?
For England may keep faith
For all that is done and said.
We know their dream ; enough
To know they dreamed and are dead ;
And what if excess of love
Bewildered them till they died ?
I write it out in a verse—
MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly :
A terrible beauty is born.

—*W. B. Yeats*

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THE HOLLOW MEN

I

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar.

Shape without form, shade without colour,
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom
Remember us—if at all—not as lost
Violent souls, but only
As the hollow men
The stuffed men

II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
In death's dream kingdom
These do not appear:
There the eyes are
Sunlight on a broken column
There is a tree swinging
And voices are
In the wind's singing

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More distant and more solemn
Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer
In death's dream kingdom
Let me also wear
Such deliberate disguises
Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves
In a field
Behaving as the wind behaves
No nearer—

Not that final meeting
In the twilight kingdom.

III

This is the dead land
This is cactus land
Here the stone images
Are raised, here they receive
The supplication of a dead man's hand
Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this
In death's other kingdom
Walking alone
At the hour when we are
Trembling with tenderness
Lips that would kiss
Form prayers to broken stone

IV

The eyes are not here
There are no eyes here

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In this valley of dying stars
In this hollow valley
This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms.

In this last of meeting places
We grope together
And avoid speech
Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men

V

Here we go round the prickly pear
Prickly pear prickly pear
Here we go round the prickly pear
At five o'clock in the morning.

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the shadow
For Thine is the kingdom

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the motion
And the response
Life is very long

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Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the shadow

For Thine is the kingdom

For Thine is
Life is
For Thine is the

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

—*T. S. Eliot*

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THE EXPRESS

AFTER the first powerful plain manifesto
The black statement of pistons, without more fuss
But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.
Without bowing and with restrained unconcern
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,
The gasworks and at last the heavy page
Of death, printed by gravestones in the cemetery.
Beyond the town there lies the open country
Where, gathering speed, she acquires mystery,
The luminous self-possession of ships on ocean.
It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low
Then loud, and at last with a jazzy madness—
The song of her whistle screaming at curves,
Of deafening tunnels, brakes, innumerable bolts.
And always light, aerial, underneath
Goes the elate metre of her wheels.
Steaming through metal landscape on her lines
She plunges new eras of wild happiness
Where speed throws up strange shapes, broad curves
And parallels clean like the steel of guns.
At last, further than Edinburgh or Rome,
Beyond the crest of the world, she reaches night
Where only a low streamline brightness
Of phosphorus on the tossing hills is white.
Ah, like a comet through flame she moves entranced

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Wrapt in her music no bird song, no, nor bough
Breaking with honey buds, shall ever equal.

—*Stephen Spender*

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LULLABY [ಜೋಗುಳ]

Lay your sleeping head, my love,
Human on my faithless arm;
Time and fevers burn away
Individual beauty from
Thoughtful children, and the grave
Proves the child ephemeral:
But in my arms till break of day
Let the living creature lie,
Mortal, guilty, but to me
The entirely beautiful.

Soul and body have no bounds:
To lovers as they lie upon
Her tolerant enchanted slope
In their ordinary swoon,
Grave the vision Venus sends
Of supernatural sympathy,
Universal love and hope;
While an abstract insight wakes
Among the glaciers and the rocks
The hermits' carnal ecstasy.

Certainty, fidelity
On the stroke of midnight pass
Like vibrations of a bell
And fashionable madness raise
Their pedantic boring cry:
Every farthing of the cost,
All the dreaded cards foretell,
Shall be paid, but from this night
Not a whisper, not a thought,
Not a kiss nor look be lost.

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Beauty, midnight, vision dies:
Let the winds of dawn that blow
Softly round your dreaming head
Such a day of welcome show
Eye and knocking heart may bless,
Find our mortal world enough;
Noons of dryness find you fed
By the involuntary powers,
Nights of insult let you pass
Watched by every human love.

—*W. H. Auden*

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THE ZEBRAS

From the dark woods that breathe of fallen showers,
Harnessed with level rays in golden rains,
The Zebras draw the dawn across the plains,
Wading knee-deep among the scarlet flowers.
The sunlight, withering their blanks with fire,
Flashes between the shadows as they pass
Barred with electric tremors through the grass
Like wind along the gold strings of a lyre.
Into the flushed air snorting rosy plumes
That smoulder round their feet in drifting fumes,
With dove-like voices call the distant fillies,
While round the herds the stallion wheels his flight,
Engine of beauty volted with delight,
To roll his mare among the trampled lilies.

—*Roy Campbell*

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NIGHT HERONS

It was after a day's rain:
the street facing the west
was lit with growing yellow;
the black road gleamed.

First one child looked and saw
and told another.
Face after face, the windows
flowered with eyes.

It was like a long fuse lighted,
the news travelling.
No one called out loudly;
everyone said 'Hush'.

The light deepened; the wet road
answered in daffodil colours,
and down its centre
walked the two tall herons.

Stranger than wild birds, even,
what happened on those faces:
suddenly believing in something,
they smiled and opened.

Children thought of fountains,
circuses, swans feeding:
women remembered words
spoken when they were young.

Everyone said 'Hush';
no one spoke loudly;
but suddenly the herons
rose and were gone. The light faded.

—*Judith Wright*

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TWIST

In a little shanty town
was on a night like this

girls were sitting down
around the town
like this

some were young
and some were brown
i even found
a miss

who was black and brown
and really did
the twist

watch her move her wrist
and feel your belly twist
feel the hunger thunder
when her hip bones twist

try to hold her keep her under
while the juke box hiss
twist the music out of hunger
on a night like this.

—*Edward Brathwaite*

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NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

I remember the night my mother
was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours
of steady rain had driven him
to crawl beneath a sack of rice.
Parting with his poison—flash
of diabolic tail in the dark room—
he risked the rain again.
The peasants came like swarms of flies
and buzzed the name of God a hundred times
to paralyse the Evil One.
With candles and with lanterns
throwing giant scorpion shadows
on the sun-baked walls
they searched for him : he was not found.
They clicked their tongues.
With every movement that the scorpion made
his poison moved in Mother's blood, they said.
May he sit still, they said.
May the sins of your previous birth
be burned away tonight, they said.
May your suffering decrease
the misfortunes of your next birth, they said.
May the sum of evil
balanced in this unreal world
against the sum of good
become diminished by your pain, they said.
May the poison purify your flesh
of desire, and your spirit of ambition,
they said, and they sat around
on the floor with my mother in the centre,
the peace of understanding on each face.

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More candles, more lanterns more neighbours,
more insects, and the endless rain.
My mother twisted through and through
groaning on a mat.
My father, sceptic rationalist,
trying every curse and blessing,
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid.
He even poured a little paraffin
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it.
I watched the flame feeding on my mother.
I watched the holy man perform his rites
to tame the poison with an incantation.
After twenty hours
it lost its sting.
My mother only said
Thank God the scorpion picked on me
and spared my children.

—*Nissim Ezekiel*

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NOTES

William Shakespeare, the great English poet and dramatist was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1564. In his twentyfirst year he went to London and within a few years had made a name for himself as a playwright. Besides his immortal plays he composed three longer poems and over 150 sonnets.

His sonnets are usually divided into two groups. The first group of 126 sonnets were addressed to a young man of singular beauty. The identity of the young man is still a matter of dispute. Since the sonnets were dedicated to W. H., Critics suggest that the young patron is the Earl of Southampton whose name Henry Wriothesley corresponds to the initials. Others put forward the theory that W. H. are the initials of William Herbert, the Earl of Pembroke. Whoever the young man may be, he has inspired some of the noblest lyrics in English language.

The sonnets form a sequence. There is continuity of theme and treatment. A beautiful tale of friendship is overshadowed by betrayal and treachery. A rival poet brings about estrangement between the friends. A dark lady, fascinating but deceiving, poisons the relationship further. The last 28 sonnets are addressed to her.

A sonnet is a poem of 14 lines dealing with a single theme or mood or emotion. There are two types of sonnets-Petrarchan and

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Shakespearean. The petrarchan model was first introduced in England by Wyatt and Surrey. Shakespeare modified it in many ways. The petrarchan sonnet is divided into two parts. The first eight lines form the octave and the next six, the sestet. Shakespearean sonnet has three quatrains of four lines each and a couplet. The petrarchan sonnet has totally five rhymes and Shakespearen sonnet, seven rhymes. Iambic pentameter is the basis of Shakespeare's sonnets.

FULL MANY A GLORIOUS MORNING

flatter the mountain tops: the golden rays of the sun transform the mountain tops into a spectacle of beauty.

Sovereign eye: The sun.

rack: Cloud vapour.

stain: grow dim.

anon: soon.

out, alack: dark clouds of upper air.

LET ME NOT

admit: allow.

bark: ship.

ever-fixed mark: an object on shore or sea serving as a guide to travellers.

height taken: position of a ship reckoned with reference to the stars.

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ON HIS BLINDNESS

John Milton is one of the greatest poets in English. He was born in 1608, the son of John Milton, the elder, a serviceman and composer of music. He was educated at St. Paul's School and Christ's College, Cambridge. After leaving College, he lived with his father at Horton, reading and writing, generally preparing himself for his vocation as a poet. His shorter poems, *L' Allegro, Il Penseroso* and *Lycidas* were written during this period. Later he travelled in France and Italy and returned to England in 1641. Being an ardent protestant he supported Cromwell during the civil war. When Cromwell became the Lord Protector of England, he appointed Milton as his Latin Secretary. For the next twenty years he was engaged in polemical writing. When Charles II returned Milton was arrested but his life was spared at the entreaty of his friends. Though completely blind and fallen on evil days he did not despair. Th two great epic poems in English, *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* and the poetic drama *Samson Agonistes* were written during this last phase of his life. He died in 1674.

Milton wrote nineteen sonnets in English. Some of them are personal; some others are political. He was the first notable writer in English who exploited other themes than love in the sonnet. He returned to the petrarchan form of the sonnet. "Milton's sonnets strike a new note of lofty dignity conformable to his

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epic personality" (Hanford). Milton wanted to dedicate his poetry to justifying the ways of god to man. In spite of doctors' warning he did not give up reading or writing pamphlets to justify the Civil War. He became totally blind at the age of forty-three. Yet Milton did not wallow in self pity or utter a cry of despair. The great concepts of humility, love and patience are given a memorable expression in this sonnet. Dignity and restraint are writ all over the poem.

NOTES

Light : eyesight.

Spent : gone.

ere : before.

lodged : remaining.

chide : rebuke.

post : hurry.

talent : Gold coin used by the Romans. Here it refers to Milton's poetic gift. See Matthew 25.

bent : determined.

fondly : foolishly.

SONG : SWEETEST LOVE I DO NOT GOE

John Donne (1573-1631) was an English poet and clergyman generally considered the greatest of the metaphysical poets. Donne earned a

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reputation for his clever, often sensual lyrics and for essays and verse satires. Later, he became famous as a writer of exalted religious poetry as in *An Anatomy of the World* and *Of Progresse of the Soul,* both written as elegies for the daughter of a patron. His poetry is remarkable not only for its deep religious feeling (notably solemn in the *Holy Sonnets*) but for virtuosity, with long-drawn complicated figures called 'conceits', exquisite melody and rhyme and sharp wit to underline his philosophical utterances.

Song : Sweetest Love, I do not goe taken from his *Songs and Sonnets* was perhaps written when the poet was leaving on a tour of the continent and separation from his wife-Anne—had become inevitable. Anne was unwilling to stay back as she feared that some stroke of ill luck might befall him during the period of their separation. On hearing her anxiety and fear, Donne assures her of his safe and quick return. He tells her that he is leaving her not because he wants to be away from her. (The tour, in other words, has become inevitable). Since they are certainly going to be separated by death, temporary absence from each other is a sort of a rehearsal of death. His return is as sure as the return of the sun to the east and the speed even greater. By sighing and weeping his wife would in fact be sighing *his* soul away and making *his* life-blood decay. So, he consoles her by telling her to think of their

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separation as a kind of sleep. Those that love each other truly are in fact never parted.

NOTES

For Weariness of thee: Because I am disgusted with you.

Since I take more wings and spurres than he: Certainly, I shall return home with greater speed than the sun (because, the presence of my beloved at my destination is sure to accelerate my speed).

Divining heart: (Your) heart guessing about various evil things that would befall me.

SONG FOR SAINT CECILIA'S DAY

John Dryden (1631-1700) poet, dramatist and critic was born at Aldwinkle Rectory, Northhamptonshire. He was educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge. He made a notable contribution to English Literature both in prose and poetry—in prose as a literary critic, and in poetry above all as a satirist and reasoner in verse. He wrote a large number of plays and much argumentative and narrative verse, as well as a few lyrics; his greatest poems are his satires. In 1697 appeared *Song For Saint Cecilia's Day* and *Alexander's Feast* in which, as in his satires, he rises to the highest point of his powers in a verse swift and heart-stirring. *Song for Saint Cecilia's Day* is

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an ode on the power of music. Saint Cecilia was the legendary inventor of the organ. She is a patron of musicians, her feast day being November 22.

NOTES

diapason : the climax of the whole melody.

Jubal : In Genesis IV.21 Jubal is named as "the father of all such as handle the harp and organ."

Orpheus : In greek legend, the son of Calliope and Apollo. He was the greatest bard before Homer. With the lyre given him by Apollo, he could move even inanimate objects.

HOW SWEET I ROAMED

Poet, painter and mystic, *William Blake* (1757-1827) was one of the precursors of the Romantic Movement. His poetry marks the transition from the Neo-classical to Romantic poetry. He anticipated some of the tendencies of the Romantic Revival, like the distrust of reason and the glorification of imagination. His two well-known collections of poems are *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. The first volume contains songs of pleasant glee. The poet looks at the world through the consciousness of the child who is not yet corrupted by the adult world of experience. He uses images like lamb, flowers, birds and so on. The

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second volume deals with the absence of harmony between man and Nature, caused by the inner divisions of the human soul. The poet concretises his thought in such images as chain, thorn and thunder. Gifted with a very vivid imagination, Blake is said to have had prophetic visions even as a little boy. Discontented with contemporary society, he formulated a highly mystical system which gives meaning to many of his poems which are remarkable for their simplicity of style and symbolic overtones.

"How Sweet I Roamed", taken from Blake's *Poetical Sketches*, has the following theme, the loss of liberty and joy in the process of growing up. It deals with the two different states of the human soul. The state of innocence is conveyed through the images of field, roses and lily, and the state of experience through the images of silken net and golden cage. The first stanza describes a state of bliss till the child encountered the Prince of Love who, strangely enough, destroyed his sense of freedom. The second stanza gives an account of the golden pleasures offered by the Prince. Here, lily and rose stand for the pure joy which was to be destroyed later. Stanza III tells us how Phoebus, the god of poetry and music and metaphorically an accomplice of the Prince of Love, lured him into his golden cage. The Prince, playing with his victim, mocks his loss of liberty and innocence. Primal instincts, as one grows up, are stifled by a desire for love, comfort and protection.

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FROST AT MIDNIGHT

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 - 1834), English poet, critic and philosopher was also a leader of the romantics. In 1798 Coleridge and Wordsworth published *Lyrical Ballads*, the most important single work of the Romantic Movement. *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Christabel*, *Kubla Khan*, *Dejection: an ode* are other memorable poems of Coleridge. His eldest son Hartley Coleridge ('my cradled infant' of *Frost at midnight*') wrote poetry and critical biographies. Coleridge's daughter Sarah Coleridge edited some of her father's works and also wrote a fairy tale called *Phantasmion* in 1837. It has been suggested that "had he met Dorothy Wordsworth a little before he married Southey's sister-in-law; had he parted from Wordsworth a little later; and, had he surrendered less easily and completely to the consolations of German metaphysics and Chinese opium, his achievements would have been greater."

The perfectly calm atmosphere at midnight nudges the poet into a mood of nostalgia. He remembers a few things about his sweet birthplace and school-life in London. Lines 44-74 give us details regarding the poet's hopes and aspirations regarding his cradled infant—a year and a half old, slumbering peacefully.

Thus, the poem is not so much about the Frost at midnight as about the thoughts and feelings evoked by that silent hour in the poet.

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NOTES

My cradled infant: Coleridge's eldest son Hartley (1796-1849) whose early promise as a poet and author was not quite fulfilled.

Film: Thin layer (of soot/ash).

Flaps and freaks: Flutterings.

toy: trifling amusement.

at school: at Christ's hospital, London, where Coleridge was sent at the age of 10.

Stranger: The thin layer of soot or ash. It was believed that these 'films' portended the arrival of some absent friend. So, 'stranger' refers to a visitor (not belonging to the house).

my.....birth place: ottery, St. Mary, Devon; his father was a vicar of the church.

Fair-day: Annual gathering, mainly to sell and buy cattle; there were also amusements.

Swimming book: Book whose lines appeared to be hazy (out of focus) as his eyes were filled with tears.

image: are exact copies.

cloisters: Christ's Hospital, London.

Lines: 59-62: remind us of Wordsworth. Nature is the expression of God. It is the language in which He teaches the oneness of all things with Himself.

Line to Smokes...thaw: A thin smoke like

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vapour rises from the snow on the thatched roof as the sun shines on it.

trances: intervals (when the wind is silent).

LAODAMIA

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was born at Cockermouth in cumberland. His father was an attorney who was land agent to Lord Lousdale. His mother died when he was seven and his father when he was thirteen, but with the help of uncles he was given a good education at Hawkshead School and St. John's College, Cambridge. In 1793 appeared his first published works, *An Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches of a Pedestrian Tour in the Alps*. In 1798 along with his friend Coleridge he published the *Lyrical Ballads*, the important landmark in the English Literature. The *Lyrical Ballads*, it may be said, ushered in the Romantic Revival and fundamentally changed the whole conception of poetic values in his own country. He contended in his famous *Preface* that poetry should use the language of ordinary speech but he himself does not always abide by it (for example: Laodamia). However the general impression that his poetry gives, is one of unadorned simplicity. Such lyrics as *To the Cuckoo* and *I wandered Lonely as a Cloud* restored to English poetry a clarity and reality from which it had long been divorced. They also illustrate his second great gift to English

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literature, his philosophy of a return to Nature. He reawakened readers to the beauty of bird and tree and mountain. Nature to him was something to be worshipped, so that even the meanest flower could inspire "thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." This feeling of a mystic union with Nature is found throughout his poetry and above all in the *Immortality Ode* which embodies the doctrine of a pre-existence of which earthly beauty serves to remind us. With his Nature poetry he established a tradition which has lasted over a century and put all later poets in his debt.

Laodamia was composed in 1814 at Rydal Mount, after re-reading Vergil with his son, and was first published in 1815.

Laodamia was the daughter of Acastus and wife of Pratesilaus, a Thesalian king, who accompanied the rest of the Greeks to the Trojan war. The Greek who first set foot on the Trojan shore was doomed by the Delphic Oracle to death, a fate to which Protesilaus devoted himself, being slain by Hector. Laodamia grieved over his loss with such constancy that the gods allowed him to come back to earth from the lower world and re-visit the wife for three hours. She killed herself, or, according to Wordsworth died of a broken heart, upon his return to the shades.

Wordsworth says: "The incident of the trees growing and withering put the subject into my thoughts, and I wrote with the hope of giving a lofty tone to it, as far as I know,

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has been given to it by any of the ancients who have treated of it. It cost me more trouble than almost anything of equal length I have ever written."

NOTES

Infernal gods: gods of the lower world.

suppliant: earnestly entreating.

expects: awaits.

winged Mercury: Mercury, the Greek Hermes, was the "conductor of souls" to and from the lower regions and was the messenger of the gods. He wore winged sandals and a winged cap and carried a wand entwined at one end with serpents.

A generous cause: a noble, worthy cause.

self-devoted: to devote oneself to the gods below.

the conscious Parcae: the Parcae who were conscious of what was happening.The Parcae were three goddesses who presided over human life: named clotho, whose province was the moment of birth, and who held a distaff; Lachesis, who spun the thread of human life; and Atropos who cut it.

a stygian hue: a hue of the lower world. The Styx was one of the rivers of the lower regions.

Earth ..... pains: Earthly life, bringing old age, in due course puts an end to the delights

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of sense; but in the life of the lower world such delights are not merely ended, but despised; grave and temperate are the pleasures and pains that inhabit there. *Erebus* was the son of Chaos and Darkness and the husband of Night, by whom he had Day. The word was often used, as here to signify the lower world itself.

Hercules: This hero's twelfth and last labour was to bring up from the lower world cerberus, the three-headed dog which guarded the entrance to Hades; and in connection with this adventure, he rescued and brought back with him Alcestis, the wife of Admetus, who had voluntarily laid down her life to save her husband from death. Alcestis, being sister to Acastus, was aunt to Laodamia.

a reanimated.....

vernal bloom: Alcestis came back to earth not as a spectre, but as a young, fresh, living person.

Medea's spell.....: The witch Medea restored her husband Jason's father Aeson, to youthful vigour by drawing away the blood from his veins and filling them with the juice of certain herbs.

than strength..... star: than the force of Hercules or the spells of Medea.

If thou goest, I follow: If thou goes back to

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Hades, I will kill myself and so follow thee.

whose course is equable: where the course of existence is even and calm.

The end: the object, purpose.

who: i.e., in that I.

At Aulis: Aulis was a town on the sea coast of Boeotia, where the Greek fleet, assembled to sail against Troy, was detained by contrary winds, through the anger of Artemis, whom Agamemnon, the Greek general had offended. To appease the goddess, Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter, Iphigenia, and favourable wind was given.

suspense: hesitation on our part.

In soul etc: I drove the shameful thought from my mind.

Hellespont: The modern Dardanelles, narrow strait between the Aegean sea and the sea of Marmora. Ilium or Troy, stood on its shore.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

John Keats (1795-1821) was born in London. His father was a livery stable keeper who had married his master's daughter. In 1804 his father was killed in a riding accident, and in 1810 his mother died of consumption. Keats was educated at Enfield and at the age of fifteen

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he was apprenticed to a surgeon. Five years later he moved to London, where in 1816 he was appointed a dresser at Guy's Hospital and later qualified as a surgeon. Throughout these years he had been reading widely, especially on classical themes, and in 1815 he wrote his famous sonnet 'on First looking Into Chapman's Homer'. In 1817 he published his first volume of *Poems*, which included some five sonnets and it was then that he abandoned surgery for literature.

Keats lived for only 25 years and his greatest poetry belongs to less than as many months. In the 20 months from June, 1818 to October, 1819 he wrote a series of matchless poems, of which *Hyperion*, *The Eve of St. Agnes*, the great *Odes*, and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* are among the greatest.

Keats found beauty everywhere, in nature, in art, and in human life. He is the most richly sensuous among the English poets. He was a very great artist, with two supreme gifts—the gift of verbal magic, in epithet and phrase; and a pictorial and plastic quality of imagination which fills his poems with marvellous effects like those of sculpture.

Ode to a Nightingale was written in 1819 when the poet heard a nightingale singing in the garden of the Hampstead house where he was staying. The Ode displays Keats's power as a master of poetic language at its highest. Here the thought is of the contrast-the contrast between the joy and beauty and apparent permanence of the song of the nightingale, and

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the sorrow and transcience of beauty and joy in human life.

NOTES

drains : dregs.

lethe : the river of Hades, dipping in which caused oblivion.

Dryad : tree-nymph.

Flora : goddess of flowers.

Provencal Song : Song of provence, a place in Southern France.

South : wine of the south.

Hippocrene : a fountain of the Muses on Mt. Helicon, hence metaphorically, the source of poetic inspiration. According to Keats red wine is the true inspirer of poetry, rather than the colourless water of the original Hippocrene.

blushful : red.

beaded : like beads.

Bacchus : god of wine.

incense : scented flower.

sweet : sweet smelling flower.

clown : peasant.

requiem : a hymn praying for the rest of the soul of the dead. The bird's song would be this for Keats if he died in the forest.

Ruth : she was a Moabitess married to a Jew in Moab. After her husband died, she insisted on migrating with her mother-in-

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law, Naomi, to the 'alien' land of Judah in Palestine. There she gleaned corn in the fields of a kinsman of Naomi.

Magic Casements: i.e. listeners at the open windows of enchanted palaces.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the most representative poet of the Victorian age was born the son of a clergyman in Licolnshire. He started writing poetry in childhood and later won the Chancellor's prize for poetry in Cambridge. The volume of poetry published in 1833 contains some of his finest minor poems like "The Lotos Eaters." His first major work is the long elegy "In Memoriam" inspired by the death of his beloved friend, Arthur Hallam. It established him as a leading thinker of the age and after Wordsworth's death he was elevated to the position of the poet Laureate. In 1844 he was raised to peerage.

His major poems reflect the complex tendencies of his age in all great spheres of human thought—in politics, in religion and in social life. But today Tennyson is remembered for his exquisite lyrics which portray the beauty of earth, sea and sky in finely modulated phrases. He is one of the most quoted of English poets which is a tribute to his wonderful verbal music.

His limitations are a streak of sentimentality,

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a straining after effect and lack of original thinking.

Morte d' Arthur (literally Death of Arthur) had appeared in the volume of 1842. Later it was embellished and appeared as *Passing of Arthur in Idylls of the King. Morte d' Arthur* is designed as an epical fragment but an Idyll is different. It is a new form. The Idylls are allegorical. King Arthur stands for Religious Faith and the Round Table for liberal institutions. King Arthur of Britain is the Central figure in celtic legends and he is said to have built up the institution of the Round Table. He gathered about him his chosen knights and they sat at a Round Table so that there might be no quarrels as to who should be above the other. Now and again these Knights would go out to seek adventures, to succour people in distress, to redress wrongs and to uphold the Christ. The Quest for the Holy Grail, the cup supposed to be used by Christ during the last supper is associated with Arthurian legends.

The order of the Round Table was split up by the treachery of the Queen who fell in love with Sir Lancelot. Arthur's nephews plotted against Sir Lancelot and revealing the Queen's love for him forced Arthur to fight with him. While Arthur was fighting with Lancelot in France, his nephew Sir Mordred proclaimed himself the King and tried to seduce the Queen. Arthur returned to Britain and fought with his nephew. In the terrible battle that followed

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more than a lakh people were killed. Sir Mordred was slain but Arthur received a grievous blow. Knowing that he was dying he requested Sir Bedivere to throw his wonderful sword away into the lake and carry him to the barge where three veiled Queens were waiting. Arthur's passing was as mysterious as his birth.

Tennyson's Tales of the Round Table called Idylls of the King are based on Sir Thomas Malory's translations of old French Tales published in .1485 A.D.

NOTES

King Arthur's table: The institution of Knight Errantry. The table is said to have been constructed by Merlin and gifted to Arthur by his father-in-law.

Lyonnesse: Fabled land connecting cornwall and the scilly Isles, now supposed to be submerged. It was the land of Arthur.

Bedivere: The cup-bearer of Arthur. He is always called bold Bedivere. The use of permanent adjective is a part of epic convention.

Chancel: Eastern part of the church.

strait: a narrow passage in the sea between two portions of land.

a great water: Probably a lake.

camelot: seat of King Arthur. Today it is identified with Winchester. In its country hall an ancient round table painted with the names of the Knights is found.

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Merlin : A great magician who played a prominent part in the education of King Arthur.

Come again : Merlin had prophesied that King Arthur would not die but come again and rule over Britain.

what will be, be' : He is resigned to his future and accepts the decision of God as a true Christian.

helm : helmet.

Exacaliber : The famous sword of King Arthur given to him by the Lady of the Lake.

an arm Rose up : arm of the Lady of the Lake. She was Arthur's sister.

Samite : a rich silk fabric.

mystic : mysterious.

hest : *behest* : command.

haft : *handle* : here the hilt of the sword.

topaz : a precious stone.

jacinth : orange coloured semiprecious stone.

waterflags : yellow Irises.

marge : poetical word for margin ; edge.

fealty : Loyalty to a master.

lief : beloved.

chased : engraved or inlaid.

wrought : fashioned.

streamer of the northern morn : This is a reference to the splendid phenomenon of nature—Aurora Borealis. Electrical discharges acting on rarified gases of

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atmosphere produce concentric rainbows. It happens in the northern sky near the north pole. It is an Epic simile. Streamer is actually a beam of light shooting up from the horizon.

Remorsefully: with pity.

the deep behind him: Behind him lay the sea.

a cry before: Lamentation from the Queens.

Black-stoled: Stole is a long robe.

Three Queens: Queen Morgan le Fay (Arthur's sister), Queen of North casque helmet, Galis, Queen of the waste Lands.

Greaves: cup-like protective armour for the shins.

cuisses: Protective plates for the front part of the thigh.

the tallest of them all: His sister.

Elders: wise men of the East, the Magi who greeted the infant Christ with gifts.

Avilion: It is the Celtic counterpart of the Greek Elysium.

THE LAST RIDE TOGETHER

Robert Browning (1812-1889) one of the major victorian poets began writing verse at the age of five. He was encouraged by his father who believed in the pursuit of knowledge through self-study. The son followed suit and refused to complete his studies at the new

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London University. Developed the *Dramatic Monologue* as a literary form for intense psychological portrayals in verse, e.g. *My Last Duchess, The Last Ride Together, Fra Lippo Lippi* and *Andrea Del Sarto.* In longer poems such as *Sordello, Dramatic Personae* and *The Ring and the Book.* Browning displays the same insight expressed in a highly compressed style often considered as obscure. Also wrote lyrics and poetic dramas. Married Elizabeth Barret after a romantic courtship. Browning spent much time in Italy which strongly influenced his poetry.

The Last Ride Together, a love-lyric first published in *Men and Women* (1855) is one of Browning's finest dramatic monologues. A dramatic monologue is closely related to the *Soliloquy* ("a 'speech' by a character in a play who appears *alone* on the stage and, by a sort of an unspoken compact between the dramatist and his audience, is permitted to utter his thoughts and describe the impressions passing in his mind").

The originality of this method is to be appreciated. A dramatic situation slowly unfolds itself in a highly artful way 'presenting a series of details in such a way as to make drama out of our acquirement of information. Our curiosity is quickly aroused and with such speed and over such a wide area of material that the progressive satisfaction of our curiosity and the allaying of our suspense proceeds much more slowly, only gradually taking the mystification at the

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The age of confusion'
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very end of the poem'. In a dramatic monologue, nothing is presented by way of explanation or comment from outside. Everything is given in the direct words of the speaker. It is as if we spy over him and overhear what he says. The speaker, in other words, is totally unaware of our listening. We are also made to feel the presence of other characters though they do not physically appear before us.

In 'The Last Ride Together', a young lover is rejected by his beloved. But, this does not dampen the spirit of the young man. He feels supremely thrilled as he is allowed to ride for the last time with his beloved. He does not want to think of the 'if's and 'but's of the past. All that he is interested in is the present—"Here we are riding, she and I." The robust optimism of Browning lends a special charm to the love-lyric. In a moment of exultation, he dreams of the world suddenly coming to an end so that he may find himself riding into eternity in the company of his beloved.

NOTES

Line 5: written: i.e. in the book of Fate (as decreed by God).

Line 10: beside: Besides.

Line 17: The Lover's heart had almost stopped beating as he anxiously waited for her answer.

Lines 23-33: The mingling of joy and fear in the young lover is compared to the fearful

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ecstasy of a person, who, passionately admiring a cloud with the light of the sun, the moon and the star on it feels that his love is drawing the heavens down to him.

Lines 24-25 : billowy bosomed : The cloud, as a whole, resembles a bosom but with smaller undulation like foaming billows.

overbowed-benedictions : the light shining on it is imagined to be the blessings from the sun, the moon and the evening star.

Line 31 : Till flesh ..... here ! : In such a blissful state, all physical sensations seem to disappear.

Lines 34-36 : My soul ..... the wind : Just as a roll of creased and crumpled paper becomes smooth again in the wind, his soul too, long crushed by an unbearable pressure of suspense revives and expands freely.

Line 40 : might have gained/might have missed.

Lines 45-55 : Failure or partial success is the general human lot.

Lines 56-58 : Human achievement always falls short of its aim and rewards are inadequate in all walks of life.

Line 62 : An obituary notice of hardly ten lines in a newspaper is all that the world pays as a tribute to the services of a departed Statesman !

Lines 63-5 : The brave general who lost his life in the process of capturing an enemy

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post and planted his country's flag there has his name scratched on the stones of Westminster Abbey (bones = of the men who died in action).

Lines 68-9: The poet expresses in verse form what other men can only feel.

Lines 69-70: Add the word 'that' after 'expressed'.

Line 71: *pace ..... rhyme*: describe in verse *side by side*: refers to regular verse lines.

Lines 80-81: *whence ..... burn*: A living girl is more beautiful than any statue even though it may be a representation of the goddess of beauty.

Line 87: its particular style of music will quickly cease to please.

Lines 89-98: complete reward in this world would leave nothing further to hope for in heaven! This reminds us of these lines of Browning in *Andrea del Sarto*.

> Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp or what's a Heaven for?

Lines 95: *This glory garland ..... soul*: The lover regards his joy not only like a wreath of flowers but also similar to the halo round a celestial being.

Lines 100-10: Perhaps heavenly life is nothing other than this bliss in concentrated form lasting for ever!

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MANDALAY

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) was an English poet, novelist and story writer born in India. His popular poems are found in "*Departmental Ditties*" and *Barrack-Room Ballads*. Some of his well-known stories can be read in *Plain Tales from the Hills* and *Soldiers Three*. Children's stories such as *The Jungle Book*, *Captains Courageous*, *Kim* and *Just So Stories* are remembered more than his other works. *Mandalay* and *Gunga Din* are poems that are anthologized quite frequently in books meant for under-graduate students in India. Through his works Kipling interpreted India, the army and British imperialism and was England's first Nobel Prize Winner in literature (1907).

Mandalay is a literary ballad. It lends itself to be sung to an audience. Here is a raw British soldier who goes on telling us in his own English all about his 'past' life in Mandalay. The ballad is richly musical and colourful. As we read the sensuous descriptions of the shooting pagodas, the bright green palm trees, the tinkling temple bells, the chunking paddles, the rich rice fields covered with a mantle of mist, the red setting sun, the hathis, the flying fishes and the steamers, we certainly feel refreshed. The British soldier remembers in particular his love—a Burmese girl with her yellow petticoat and green cap and her banjo, wasting christian kisses on an *heathen idol*, the idol of the buddha. Having come back to the dull, grey city of London, he

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grows reminiscent and longs for those happy happy days. He gets weary of wasting his life in the grey atmosphere of London. Even though he has fifty girl friends he knows that all their love talk is just hollow. Here is a fine contrast between the pure true love of the Burmese girl friend, and the empty pretentious talk of his London girl friends.

NOTES

Mandalay: Town in Upper Burma on the Irrawaddy River; was capital of the Burmese kingdom.

Moulmein: a port in South Burma at the mouth of the *Salween river*. (Here 'moulmein' is used as an adjective).

Flotilla: a fleet of small warships.

Crost: across.

yaller: yellow.

Theeba's Queen: Queen of Sheba.

whacking: Big of its kind.

The Great Gawd Budd: The Great God Buddha.

Pulcky: Bulky.

Outer: Out of.

Beefy face: Stupid, expressionless face.

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

Walt Whitman (1819-1892) is a great American poet who celebrated the ideals of

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democracy. Before becoming a writer, he worked in different capacities such as a printer, a magazine editor and as a school teacher. During the civil war, he served as a volunteer in the Army Medical Corps. He published his first collection of poems in 1855. But it received little attention because the unconventionality of his verse form was not appealing to the critics. Continually revising his earlier work, Whitman brought all his compositions under the single title *Leaves of Grass*. This volume created a revolution, as it were, in literary taste and technique.

"O Captain! My Captain!" is an elegy on the death of Abraham Lincoln, one of the great Presidents of America. The country plunged into a Civil War over the question of Negro slavery. Lincoln, determined to avoid the disintegration of the country, forced the Southern States to remain in the Union. The war ended with the abolition of slavery. A few days after the conclusion of the war, Lincoln was shot dead in a theatre. Whitman, an admirer of Lincoln's idealism and strength of character, gives expression to his private grief in this poem. Another poem which is much greater in dealing with this highly emotional situation is *When Lilacs in the Dooryard Bloomed*.

Employing the sailor-ship imagery, the poem treats the incident in three stanzas. The first stanza reveals the poet assuming the role of a sailor who describes the fearful trip and its outcome. Stanza II tells why he wants his

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captain to rise from the deck. The last stanza explains why the captain does not answer and what the poet wishes to do. The poem reads like a formal address on a public occasion.

NOTES

Fearful trip: refers to Lincoln guiding the country through a terrible Civil War.

rack: destructive storm.

keel: bottom of the ship.

Dear father: used metaphorically.

mournful tread: with heavy steps, on account of sadness at heart.

TWO TRAMPS IN MUD TIME

Robert Frost (1874-1963) is probably the best known modern American poet. His poems are deceptively simple, but hide his complexity of thought. Describing the simple anecdotes of rural America, they touch upon the basic issues of life. That is, the poems move from the specific and the personal to the universally significant. Frost spent most of his life, farming and writing, in north of Boston. Success as a poet came to him rather late in life. His first book of poetry, *A Boy's Will,* was received with enthusiasm in England. From then on, his reputation as a notable American poet was secure. He travelled throughout his country giving lectures and public readings from his

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own poetry. Among his other publications are *New Hampshire* which won him the Pulitzer Prize, *West-Running Brook* and *A Witness Tree*. Frost believed that poems begin in delight and end in wisdom. So, he was not afraid to be didactic, but he was never dogmatic. Poetry to him was essentially dramatic. Whatever his theme might be, he dramatised it for the reader. Some of his haunting poems such as "The Wood-Pile", "Mending Wall", and "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening" draw on images of nature and regional materials. What is particularly interesting in Frost's poetry is his powerful use of plain language, his sharp observation and understanding of human motivations.

Two Tramps in Mud Time is a dramatic narrative in which a simple episode is moralised in the end. As is usual with Frost, the poem begins with a concrete description and proceeds to analyse the generality of human nature. It develops the conflicting motives of the poet and the professional wood-cutters. It balances the claims of love and need, and underlines the necessity of uniting vocation with avocation.

Stanzas 1 and 2 present the episode in broad outline. Two wood-cutters accost the poet who was splitting wood in springtime. They seem to think that the poet has stepped on their right of chopping wood. What the tramps would do for wages, the poet was doing for fun.

Stanzas 3 to 7 describe the season and the scene of action. The significant relation between

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the inner and the outer worlds of physicality is brought out in the description. A series of contrasts in the details observed—'The song of the blue bird would not excite a single flower to bloom'. 'There is a lurking Frost beneath the earth', *etc*—is perhaps intended to suggest the dichotomy between the seen and the unseen. The poet's intimate feeling for the objects of nature is evident in this section.

Stanzas 8 and 9: The presence of the tramps disturbs the poise of the scene. Attention is once again drawn to the theme and moral. Love and play, need and work—their claims are explicitly stated and balanced out in the end.

Stanza 10: The moral is reviewed from a broader perspective. The poet concedes that need has a better claim over love. And he expects the tramps to consider his claim too. His contention is that life is truly fulfilled, that the deed is really done, when work is play, when it is both serious and joyful.

EASTER, 1916

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939) has achieved an amazing growth of vision and art in his long poetic life. He started writing poetry in the manner of the Romantics, with Shelley and Blake as the principal influences. Then, he combined the colloquial and the formal in his search for an adequate style to express the truth of his Irish background and experience.

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During this period, two women who exerted a profound influence on his life and poetry were Maud Gonne, a beautiful actress and a nationalist leader, and Lady Gregory, a writer of some distinction. Yeats was deeply affected by the Irish Nationalist Movement, and by the bloodshed and disintegration which he noticed in Europe during and after the First World War. Unable to believe in Orthodox Christianity, Yeats sought for a metaphysical system that would compensate for the loss of his religious belief. A metaphysical strain in the manner of early Eliot began to enter his poems. The two poems on Byzantium represent the peak of his achievement. (His poetry is characterised by its intense lyricism, by its use of symbols, by its sensuous beauty and precision). His last poems are highly complex as well as symbolic in content. Generally regarded as the most influential poet of Ireland, Yeats is also a playwright and critic of considerable importance.

Easter, 1916 expresses Yeats's reaction to a rebellion by Irish nationalists in Dublin which took place on 24th April, 1916. The leaders of the rebellion, several of whom are described in the poem, were executed by the British Government. The leaders hoped that a general uprising would ensue in Ireland or at any rate their heroic struggle would have a symbolic value. The Easter events caused great sorrow and anxiety to Yeats, because he knew the chief rebels personally. Yeats, in England at the time, heard of the Dublin tragedy with mixed

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emotions. These are reflected in this poem which contrasts the casual comedy of pre-revolutionary Ireland with the terrible beauty of the Irish rebellion.

NOTES

The Club: probably the Arts club of which Yeats was a member.

That Woman's days: Constance Gore-Booth, a participant in the rebellion. The death sentence on her was commuted to penal service for life.

She rode to harriers: Harriers are a pack of hounds with huntsmen chasing hares.

This man: Patrick Pearse, the leader of the insurrection. He was a school-master and poet; hence, the reference to the winged horse, Pegasus, identified with poetic inspiration.

This other: Thomas MacDonagh, a minor writer and critic. He taught at the University College in Dublin.

This other man: Major John MacBride, a coarse soldier of fortune. Yeats hated Mac both for having married Maud Gonne and for having deserted her later. He is called a 'vainglorious lout', an extremely vain and stupid fellow.

Casual Comedy: refers to life without intensity, lived at a superficial level. The phrase characterises the society of pre-revolutionary Ireland.

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Lines 41-56 : These romantic images call up the west of Ireland. For Yeats, they also symbolise a way of living, spontaneous and dignified.

Enchanted to a stone, etc : The events of Irish Movement had made many people, including Maud Gonne, intense nationalists. The hearts of the rebels are compared to a stone for their singleness of purpose and devotion to a cause. While clouds move, horses gallop and birds fly and everything moves, the stone alone remains unmoving in the midst of a stream. The doggedness of the stone is no doubt heroic, but it also suggests the unchanging attitude, the changelessness of death. Note the ambivalence in the stone image and also in the metaphor of the mother and child in lines 60-64.

Lines 67-69 : Refer to England's promise of Home Rule for Ireland. But it was kept in abeyance at the outbreak of the war. Besides, the cause of self-determination was not generally welcomed in Ireland. Meanwhile, the executions had made martyrs of the leaders. The lines also reveal the poet's generous faith in the British Government.

Connolly : L. James Connolly, Pearse's partner in leading the rebellion. He was a trade union organiser.

Lines 79-80 : Green is the national colour of

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Ireland. The leaders who died for their belief, are fit to be numbered in verse. New heroes are created for the Irish legend. Ireland's sagging spirit is resurrected. 'A terrible beauty' is born.

THE HOLLOW MEN

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) is mainly responsible for the emergence of modern poetry in English. He rejected the poetry of emotion and detail. Instead, he created a style of startling imagery and vivid realism. In his early poetry, Eliot was concerned about the predicament of modern man in a mechanised society. His disillusionment is that of a writer who was himself involved in the crisis. His perspective changed when he accepted the Christian faith and consequently attempted to rediscover the value of spiritual discipline. The changing perception is noticeable in "The Hollow Men." His later poetry deals with themes and experiences which are explicitly religious in their appeal.

An American by birth, Eliot migrated to England for launching his poetic career. He published his first volume of poems when he was twenty-nine. Some of his outstanding achievements in poetry are *Gerontion, The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*. Eliot is also a distinguished playwright, and he revived the tradition of verse play in English. *Murder in the Cathedral* and

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The Cocktail Party may be particularly mentioned in this context. Eliot is an important critic too, and his essays on poetry, drama and criticism have revolutionised the literary taste of our time.

The theme of *The Hollow Men* is the spiritual degeneration of our time. A negative feeling of empty despair is evoked through the rhythmic creation of the opening lines. Men's heads are stuffed with straw; they have no vitality either for good or for evil. The words they whisper are likened to the sounds of the wind in dry grass, or rat's feet over broken glass.

NOTES

Lines 11-12: Other images of life paralysed by a lack of faith.

Lines 13-18: the tone of a deep, sorrowful regret. The great ones of the past, those with direct eyes, will not remember us as men searching for meaning and fulfilment.

Section II: a scene in death's dream kingdom, our living death in this world. The hollow men wear deliberate disguises to avoid meeting the eyes which penetrate their emptiness.

Section III: describes our cactus land where there is neither growth nor nourishment.

Section IV: the theme of moral degeneracy is continued. There will be no salvation

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here or hereafter because there are no eyes here. The hollow men have no spiritual insight or understanding. There will be hope only when the eyes re-appear in this valley of dying stars.

Section V: presents the circumstances and reality of our hollow frustration.

Lines 68-71: a meaningless ritual performed by the hollow men.

Lines 79-90: refer us back to the images of shape without form. The attempt to say the Lord's prayer in fragments indicates our failing spiritual energy.

Line 83: Hippocrates's famous lines 'Art is long, but life is short' is significantly reversed. Life is long, too long to endure.

The last four lines suggest that the hollow men neither live nor die heroically.

There is no trace of dignity. However, the journey motif in section IV and the faint effort to intone the Lord's prayer in section V give out the hint that the hollow men are not abandoned in the dead land. Life fortified by faith will impose a pattern on their chaotic existence.

THE EXPRESS

Stephen Spender, poet and critic, was born in London in 1909; at Oxford he became a friend

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of Auden, Day Lewis and Macneice. His volumes of poetry include *Nine Experiments* (1928), Twenty poems (1930), *The Still Centre* (1939). He was for sometime the editor of *Horizon* and from 1953 onwards he remained the editor of *Encounter*. *The Destructive Element* (1935) and *The Creative Element* (1945) are important critical works on modern literature. *World Within World* (1951) is autobiographical.

Like Auden he too felt the moral flabbiness of England and he wanted to create an awareness of its strength and beauty through his poetry. Like Auden he was fascinated by the leashed power of machinery. "Spender in particular wrote about pylons and railway engines with simple lyrical enthusiasm, as an older poet might have written about clouds, swans, or roses. Machinery signified energy" and the people had to be fortified by energy. "Drink here of energy, and only energy", Spender wrote and *The Express* is a poetic expression of that energy.

LULLABY

Early in the thirties a new school of poetry was started by a group of under-graduates in Oxford University. This group of which C. Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and Louis Macneice were important members was led by W. H. Auden. They wrote scathing poems on contemporary problems. They were filled with dismay as the

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'Age of Anxiety' continued. It was a period of worsening economic situation. Depression had brought unemployment everywhere but life went on merrily for the well-fed rich whose utter lack of concern for the less privileged shocked these poets. At first they believed that Marxism was the panacea but later gave it up. They hoped to restore living contact between man and man by showing the sickness of modern society and suggesting methods of cure. To make their warning effective they used all the available modern poetic techniques. Being well-read in psychology and sociology and the sciences they used novel imagery. Sometimes they are called the poets of the 'Pylon School'. Using the technique of Hopkins and Eliot they went on to picture the tragical plight of the modern men and women. W. H. Auden is the most influential and original of these poets and reckoned as the greatest poet after Eliot.

Wystan Hugh Auden was born in 1907, the son of a doctor. (And hence his poetry is clinical). He was educated at Christ Church, Oxford. Later he travelled in Germany and worked as a head master. His first volume of Poetry *Poems* was published in 1930. He collaborated with Isherwood in writing verse plays, *The Dog Beneath the Skin, The Ascent of 76* and *On the Frontier*. He fought in the Spanish war against dictatorship and in 1939 emigrated to America. Later he returned to England to work as a Professor of poetry in Oxford.

The Lullaby is one of his successful lyrical

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poems. His tone is witty, wry and he is more concerned with psychological and social decay than with sensuous aspect of love. Note the colloquial language and urban imagery.

THE ZEBRAS

Born in South Africa, *Roy Campbell* (1901-1957) lived an adventurous life as sailor, bullfighter and an active participant in the Spanish civil war. His poetry reflects very vividly his life and personality. Many of his poems evoke the scenes of his youth and it is difficult to ignore the power and vividness of his descriptive verse. About 1935, Campbell became a convert to the Roman Catholic Church and since then, his approach has been that of a conservative. He has developed a bold, fluent style especially in his satires on contemporary fashions in poetry.

The Zebras is a sonnet and it shows how the poet has managed the traditional form with ease and fluency. It is written in praise of primitive energy. It contains striking comparisons, and its highly evocative diction appeals a great deal to us. Note the suggestion of scientific imagery in 'engine of beauty' and 'electric tremors'.

NIGHT HERONS

Judith Wright (1915—), a contemporary

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poet from Australia, comes from a grazier family of New South Wales, and shows a strong feeling for the landscape and its traditions. To her, landscape meant something more than mere environment because it forms the background against which her vivid imagination moves unhindered. Her first book of poems, *The Moving Image*, was published in 1946. And since then, she has brought out several volumes of verse, and books for children. Her poems reveal a wide range of her thought and themes. 'Wildness' is a dominant theme in her poetry. A number of her poems deal with the mysteries of love and child birth. There are also deep meditations on life in general. All these poems are outstanding for their intensity of vision and richness of language. The poems are finely made; they are simple and unaffected, and they also contain a certain degree of involved symbolism and intellectual verse.

"Night Herons" is a poem of observation which evokes a sense of local history through the details of intense physicality. The poet's experience of the natural world is presented in a direct, vital way without avoiding the concrete and the visual. There is, however, an effort to reach beyond the immediate experience in the last two stanzas of the poem.

TWIST

A promising poet of West Indies, *Edward Brathwaite* (1930—) was born in Barbados and

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received his higher education in Cambridge. He returned to the Caribbean after staying in Ghana for eight years. He published his early poems in the literary journal *Bim*. The introspective quality of his early verse is attributed to the influence of Eliot's poetry on his formative thinking. His poetic trilogy—*Rights of Passage* (1967), *Masks* (1968), and *Islands* (1969)—is known for its depiction of West Indian consciousness. Some critics see him as a folk poet who draws his inspiration from the speech pattern and rituals of the folk. Brathwaite is perhaps one of the earliest to express the 'black consciousness' through sophisticated literary techniques. He values the culture of pre-colonial Africa which he believes to be more ordered and harmonious than the cultures of European origin. "Twist" is typical of his early style and preoccupations as a poet.

NIGHT OF THE SCORPION

Nissim Ezekiel who was born in Bombay in 1924, started writing and publishing verse in the mid 50's. He is widely accepted and acknowledged today as the father of modern Indian poetry in English. Ezekiel has officially retired from his position as Reader in English in the University of Bombay and with that has concluded a 25 year teaching career. To-day, at 62 Ezekiel has the same vigour and zeal in creating poetry, as he had earlier. Even in terms of significant output, Ezekiel ranks as one

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of our best poets. So far, he has published five collections of verse, *Three Plays*, and has also edited *An Emerson Reader, A Martin Luther King Reader, Indian Writers in Conference* and *Writing in India.* Ezekiel has lectured at the University of Leeds and a number of American Universities and Colleges.

Night of the Scorpion was first included in *The Exact Name* (1965), the fifth collection of Ezekiel's poems. It is typically Indian, both in the physical environment it creates and the responses of the different people it presents. The poem evokes our superstitious beliefs and practices. It in fact enacts an impressive ritual consisting of different reactions to the domestic tragedy of the narrator's mother being stung by a scorpion. The subtle current of irony running throughout the poem cannot however be missed.

The preposition 'of' of the title underlines the predominant role played by the scorpion during that particular night it stung the woman. It is as though the night belonged to the scorpion, the scorpion having proved formidable to everyone. The very first line of the poem brings into focus the incident (or accident ?) of the narrator's mother being stung by a scorpion. In the very next line, this creature undergoes a metamorphosis. Pronouns like 'he', 'his' and 'him' are used to refer to this culprit. The words 'diabolic' and 'dark' underline the evil potential of the scorpion. In fact, it is presented as the very personification of evil. Hence, the words "*the Evil one.*" This reference seems to

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justify the incantation and the elaborate rites performed by the holy man.

The innumerable peasants who swarm into the narrator's house do not *do* anything to bring relief to the suffering woman. They are steeped in Superstition and the narrator underlines this point by repeating the words 'they said'. After mouthing an infinite number of words about sin, suffering, previous birth, next birth, unreal world, misfortune, good and evil, body and spirit, these buzzing busy bodies promptly sit round the mother, watching her twisting through and through groaning on a mat. There is however "peace of understanding on each face!" The father in his anxiety to bring relief to his wife, tries in a tentative way, all possible available means, both ancient and modern. The narrator - a mere child - has been a passive observer of what his neighbours and his father do. Towards the end of the poem, after the poison has lost its sting, (in the normal course) we begin to look at the incident through the eyes of the mother. The poem at once "acquires a new dimension and depth by the remarkably human reaction of the mother": Thank God, the scorpion picked on me and spared my children.

As R. Parthaṣarathy puts it, this reaction of the mother to her own suffering "ironically cancels out earlier responses, both primitive and sophisticated."

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NOTES

Poison-flash : the abrupt jumping into action of the sharp, pointed white tip of the scorpion's tail in which the poison is stored.

Diabolic : very cruel and evil.

Clicked their tongues : expressed their sympathy.

Paraffin : kerosene.

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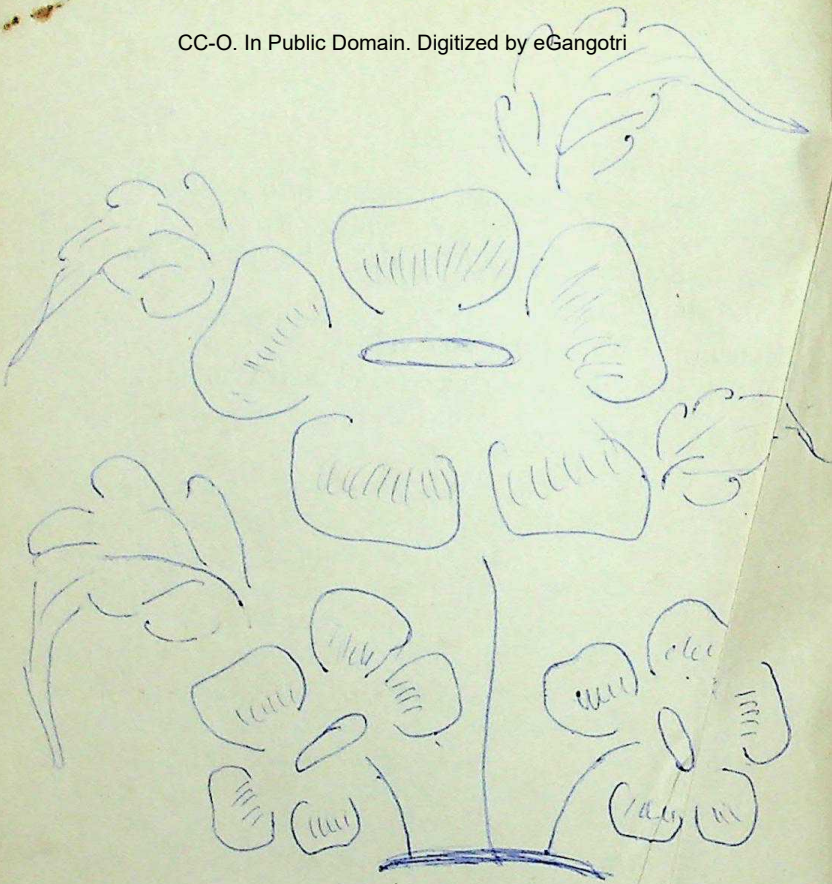

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